

Spelling and Pronunciation

Words ending in -ize and -ise

In British English some words can be spelt with either -ize or -ise. In American English, the forms with -ize is more common.

Examples are given below:

British English

Realize / realise

Computerize / computerise

Mechanize / mechanise

Baptize / baptise

American English

Realize

Mechanize

Computerize

Baptize

Most words of two or more syllables have -ise in both British and American English.

Examples are:

Surprise, revise, exercise, advise, comprise, despise, compromise, improvise, supervise, televise, advertise

Notes:

In American English, advertize is also possible.

If in doubt, remember that -ise is almost always correct in British English.

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In English, spelling words is not easy. In fact, even native English speakers often find it difficult to spell words correctly. This is mainly because the pronunciation of many English words has changed over the last few hundred years. The spelling system, on the other hand, has stayed more or less the same. Here is a list of some common words that often cause difficulty.

In the following words the letters in brackets are not pronounced.

Ev(e)ning

Asp(i)rin

Bus(i)ness

Choc(o)late

Diff(e)rent

Ev(e)ry

Marri(a)ge

Om(e)lette

Rest(au)rant

Sev(e)ral

Med(i)cine

The following four syllable words are usually pronounced like three syllable words. The letters in brackets are usually not pronounced.

Comf(or)table

Int(e)resting

Temp(e)rature

Us(u)ally

Veg(e)table

Silent letters

In the following words b is silent.

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Climb, comb, dumb

In the following words d is silent.

Handkerchief, sandwich, Wednesday

The gh is silent in the following words.

Bought, caught, ought, thought, daughter, height, high, light, might, neighbour, right, sight, tight, straight, through, weigh

In the following words h is silent

What, when, whip, why, honest, hour, honour